

# Chickenpox

Dear Parent or Guardian,

A person in our childcare program has been diagnosed with chickenpox. If your child was at child care on the following dates, he/she may have been exposed to chickenpox\*:

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(Dates)

## **What causes chickenpox?**

Chickenpox is caused by an infection with the varicella virus.

## **What are the symptoms of chickenpox?**

The symptoms of chickenpox are: feeling ill, fever and a skin rash, which is often itchy. The rash begins on the chest, back, underarms, neck and face. It starts out as red bumps which turn into blisters within several hours. These blisters scab over after a few days.

## **How serious is chickenpox?**

Though chickenpox is usually a mild disease, serious complications, such as pneumonia and skin infections can occur. Before chickenpox vaccine was available, there were over 4 million cases of chickenpox in the United States each year and approximately 100 people died each year of chickenpox complications.

## **How does a person get chickenpox?**

People get chickenpox by exposure to the droplets that come out the nose or mouth of a person with chickenpox when that person coughs or sneezes, exposure to the saliva of a person with chickenpox (sharing a cup or a toy), or to exposure to fluid from the chickenpox blisters.

## **How long does it take to come down with chickenpox after a person is exposed?**

The illness usually appears between 13 and 17 days after exposure, but can occur as soon as 10 days and up to 21 days after exposure.

## **When are people with chickenpox contagious?**

A person with chickenpox is contagious from one to two days before the rash develops until all the blisters have dried into scabs, usually about six days after the rash appears.

## **Can I keep my child from coming down with chickenpox?**

A vaccine which can prevent chickenpox (varicella vaccine) is available and is recommended for most children age 12 months of age or older who have not had chickenpox. If varicella vaccine is given within three days of exposure to chickenpox, and possibly for up to five days, it may prevent chickenpox or reduce the severity of disease. If your child has not received the varicella vaccine or had chickenpox, contact your child's health care provider and let them know your child may have been exposed to chickenpox.

## **If my child develops chickenpox, how long must he/she stay away from childcare?**

Children who develop chickenpox must be excluded from the child care until all the blisters have dried and formed scabs (about a week after the onset of the rash).

## **I am pregnant. I've never had chickenpox or received the varicella vaccine, and I was exposed to someone with chickenpox. What should I do?**

**A pregnant woman who has never had chickenpox and has never received varicella vaccine, who is exposed to chickenpox should consult her doctor immediately.**

